



PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

BY

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE RICHARD MSOWOYA

FORMER SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI

AND

HEAD OF THE SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION (SEOM)

TO

THE 2025 GENERAL ELECTION

OF THE

UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

3 NOVEMBER 2025

Your Excellency Dr Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, Former President of the Republic of Botswana and Head of the African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM);

Your Excellency Ndayizeye Domitien, Former President of the Republic of Burundi and Head of the International Conference on Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) Election Observation Mission;

Your Excellency Dr. Speciosa Kazibwe, Former Vice President of the Republic of Uganda and Head of the East African Community Election Observation Mission;

Honourable Mosotho Moepya, Chairperson of the Independent Election Commission of the Republic of South Africa and Head of the Electoral Commissions Forum;

Your Excellency Elias Magosi, SADC Executive Secretary;

Distinguished Members of the SADC Organ Troika;

Chairperson of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council;

Your Excellencies, Heads and Representatives of the Diplomatic Missions Accredited to the United Republic of Tanzania;

Distinguished Heads of International Election Observation Missions here present;

Distinguished Heads of International Organisations;

Distinguished Representatives of the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania;

Chairperson, Representatives and Members of the Electoral Commission;

SADC Election Observers;

Representatives of Local Election Observers;

Religious Leaders and Members of Civil Society Organisations;

Members of the Media;

Distinguished Guests.

1. INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and as mandated by His Excellency Prof Arthur Peter Mutharika, the President of the Republic of Malawi, and the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defense and Security Cooperation, it is my distinct honour to welcome you all to this important event where I present the Preliminary Statement of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) on the 2025 General Election in the United Republic of Tanzania. The General Election was conducted over two days, starting with the security forces on 28 October 2025 in Zanzibar, while the rest of the voters voted on 29 October 2025.

As Head of SEOM, I am ably supported by distinguished Troika representatives from the Republic of Malawi and the Kingdom of Eswatini, the SADC Secretariat and the Chairperson of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC).

The SEOM strength is 80 in total, comprising 66 observers, 13 SADC Secretariat staff and one SEAC member. The SADC observers were drawn from ten (10) Member States, namely, the Kingdoms of Eswatini and Lesotho, the Republics of Botswana, Namibia, Malawi, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The Mission deployed 27 teams of observers to 27 of the 31 regions in the United Republic of Tanzania, namely: Dar Es Salaam, Arusha, Dodoma, Geita, Iringa, Kilimanjaro, Pemba North, Mbeya, Mwanza, Morogoro, Zanzibar Central and South, Tanga, Lindi, Ruvuma, Zanzibar Urban and West, Manyara, Pemba South, Mtwara, Njombe, Shinyanga, Pwani, Singida, Rukwa, Kigoma, and Kagera. The Mission did not deploy in Katavi, Simiya, Songwe and Mara.

At the invitation of the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, the Mission observed the General Election in accordance with the Revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2021) and the relevant laws of the country.

As part of its mandate, the Mission engaged the following stakeholders: the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Zanzibar Electoral Commission (ZEC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation, the Ministry of Constitutional and Legal Affairs, the Attorney General, Political Parties, Civil Society Organisations, Academia, SADC Ambassadors and High Commissioners and other members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the United Republic of Tanzania, and the Inspector General of the Tanzania Police Force.

This preliminary report covers the Mission's observation of the pre-election period, Election Day and the counting process. The final report will include our observations of the post-election period, including the management and announcement of results.

2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

2.1 Some challenges encountered by our observers

Our observers initially experienced challenges in consulting with key stakeholders, particularly the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), as they had not been issued with Introduction Letters together with Accreditation Identification Cards as required by the law. Some INEC officials required the said Introduction Letters before consultations with the SEOM observers, but other officials did not make such a requirement.

Further, some stakeholders were reluctant to share information with the observers and often referred them to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation for further information. Despite carrying their Accreditation Identification Cards, our observers in Tanga Town were subjected to aggressive interrogation by the security forces, had their official documents, including their passports, seized, though later returned, and were forced to delete mission-related photographs from their official gadgets.

It will suffice to highlight that it is a requirement of the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2021) that Member States, and I quote, “*Facilitate the observation of the entire electoral cycle*

of their national elections by SEOMs, including the deployment of Goodwill Missions, Long Term Observers, Short Term Observers, and pre-election assessment processes".

2.2 The Political and Security Environment

The Mission observed that the country was calm and peaceful during the pre-election period and most of the election day, save for isolated incidents towards the closure of the voting. The Mission further observed incidents or threats of violence during voting, closing and counting processes in some areas. Some stakeholders attributed the calmness to a coordinated schedule that was developed by the INEC for political rallies to ensure that there is no clash or friction between political parties in their campaigns.

However, a few stakeholders cautioned that the general calm and peace belies covert acts of general intimidation of the population and opposition political parties and candidates. These stakeholders cited the alleged abductions of some political activists. They also described a tense and intimidating political atmosphere.

The stakeholders highlighted the arrest of members of the opposition, notably the detention and trial of Tundu Lissu, the leader of the main opposition party, Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA), on treason charges. The disqualification of some opposition candidates, particularly of Mr. Luhaga Mpina of ACT-Wazalendo also raised questions about the fairness of the electoral landscape, especially on the mainland. Some stakeholders viewed the

arrests and disqualification as undermining the URT's multi-party system by removing legitimate competition in the electoral process. This appears to create an uneven political playing field, which in turn also discourages public participation and voter turnout.

It is in this context that the Mission brings attention to Article 4.1.7. of the *Principles and Guidelines* that obliges Member States to and I quote: ***“Guarantee an environment of open contest with no undue exclusion and restrictions on anyone to vote as well as the right of eligible and qualified citizens to stand as candidates in any election”.***

2.3 Management of the Electoral Process

The elections were overseen by the INEC and ZEC, established under Article 74 of the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania and Article 119 of the Constitution of Zanzibar, respectively.

In this regard, the Mission observed the following:

- (i) Most stakeholders were of the view that the two Electoral Management Bodies were adequately prepared to conduct the 2025 elections;
- (ii) Voter registration was generally well conducted in phases by the Commission. The First phase was done on 20 July 2024 and concluded on 23 March 2025. The Second phase took place from 16 to 22 May 2025, covering 16 additional regions in the country.

The third phase involved the registration of new voters, including eligible prisoners, trainees of institutions of Correction of Offenders and remandees in the Permanent Voters' Register. This phase commenced on 28 June 2025 and ended on 4 July 2025;

(iii) Out of a population of 61,741,120 (Mainland Tanzania 59,851,347, and Tanzania Zanzibar 1,889,773), the Mission noted that the Commission registered 37,655,559 voters. This represents a 26.55% increase from the 29, 188, 347 registered voters in the 2020 General Election. Women comprised 50.31% of the registered voters, and the remaining 49.69% were men;

(iv) Mixed views were expressed regarding electoral law reforms. Some stakeholders expressed concern that there had not been any comprehensive electoral law reforms since the last elections, and that one party even declared non-participation in elections in the absence of constructive electoral reforms. Other stakeholders indicated that there has been a consolidation of the electoral laws, with some reforms having been introduced since the last elections. For this specific Preliminary Statement, the SEOM limits itself to the following pertinent observations, which concern the need for electoral reforms:

(a) Article 41(7) of the Constitution which covers the procedures for election of the President, provides that "*When a candidate is declared by the Electoral Commission to have been duly elected in accordance with this Article, then no court of law*

shall have any jurisdiction to inquire into the election of that candidate.” This provision effectively bars any court from entertaining any challenge against the results of a presidential election, which is contrary to the expectation of electoral justice as envisaged by Article 4.1.5 of the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

- (b) While a clear mechanism exists for lodging electoral complaints during voter registration, voting and counting processes, some stakeholders raised concerns about Article 74 (12) of the Constitution which provides that *no court shall have power to inquire into anything done by the Electoral Commission in the discharge of its functions*. Stakeholders were of the view that this limits transparency and accountability over the entire electoral process.
- (c) In terms of Articles 39, 67 and 77 of the Constitution of the URT, candidates who are not members of or sponsored by a political party cannot run in Presidential, Parliamentary or Local Government elections. These provisions have the effect of limiting the individual's freedom of association and exclude those who wish to contest in the elections without necessarily being bound to membership of a particular political party.
- (d) Some stakeholders questioned the Commission's independence given that its members are appointed by the

President, who is also chairperson of the ruling party and a presidential candidate.

- (e) Some stakeholders had reservations regarding early voting for security personnel, which is only catered for in Zanzibar. They viewed this early voting as a potential risk for electoral fraud and undermining electoral integrity, while others viewed it as necessary to enable the security and electoral personnel to fulfil their electoral duties in other areas on Election Day.

2.4 Gender and Youth Representation

The Mission noted that among 17 presidential candidates, only 3 were women. Some stakeholders raised concerns, citing persistent barriers to meaningful participation of women and youth, including limited campaign financing and logistics, leadership training and mentorship opportunities, internal nomination processes within parties, and enduring patriarchal norms.

It was the view of some stakeholders that cultural attitudes also hinder the participation of the youth, for example, in some rural areas, when youth show interest in participating in elections, the elderly express their preference for married people as opposed to single youth, as they believe married candidates are more stable.

2.5 Participation of Persons with Disabilities

The Mission noted that, out of the total number of registered voters, 49,174 voters were persons with disabilities.

2.6 Voter Education

Some stakeholders informed the Mission that youth and women-led accredited organisations played an active role in voter education, and that their participation is not only a civic duty but also enhances the democratic processes. Voter education was disseminated through various platforms, including radio and television programmes, media announcements, Commission's Public Address Vans, and dedicated Voter Service call Centres.

Some of the stakeholders highlighted the use of innovative methods for voter education, such as music, community-based role play, cartoon illustrations and tailored television shows for all. Despite these positive developments, concerns were raised about reduced funding for voter and civic education, particularly in the context of changing priorities amongst the international cooperation partners. In addition, dissatisfaction was expressed the late announcement of accredited organisations, which led to some groups losing funding from the INEC to conduct voter education. Furthermore, some established civil society organisations were of the view that they were deliberately excluded from accreditation by INEC, and this may have compromised the quality of voter education.

2.7 Freedom of Expression

Related to the political and security environment, the Mission noted concerns that there were increasing covert and overt limitations on the right to freedom of expression. It was also the view of these stakeholders that there is heavy censorship of online information platforms. The Mission observed that some social media platforms were not accessible, which could impact citizens' ability to express and receive political opinions.

2.8 State and Privately Owned Media

Both INEC and ZEC indicated that state-owned television had scheduled timeslots to cater for all political parties' messaging throughout the campaign period. In addition, the Mission noted that there were other privately owned media platforms airing campaign rallies and other campaign-related messaging. Notwithstanding this general situation, the Mission noted that state-owned media was predominantly covering election activities and messages of the ruling party.

Some stakeholders also highlighted that the private media outlets were self-censoring due to fears of losing their licences should their coverage of election issues be deemed unacceptable by the Government. They informed the Mission that the media space was more restricted than it was during the previous elections. Similar sentiments were expressed concerning online and social media platforms.

The Mission was further informed that one of the fundamental reasons for the lack of visibility of opposition parties in the media and public spaces during the campaign period was limited financial resources. Some stakeholders attributed this to the perceived fear that donors might face negative appraisals when they fund opposition parties.

4. OBSERVATIONS ON ELECTION DAY

On Election Day, the Mission observed the voting process and the performance of the INEC and ZEC in constituencies in 27 regions in the country.

The Mission was able to observe the opening of polls in some polling stations but could not generate all data relating to opening and voting processes as a result of an internet outage around midday. Due to protests in some areas and continued lack of internet connectivity, our Mission could not observe the closing and counting processes in most of the areas. Where we observed such processes, we could not generate data due to internet connectivity challenges. Below is the status as of the time the internet was shut down on voting day:

- (a) The environment outside all the polling stations visited was calm and peaceful. However, our teams in Mbeya, Dodoma, Arusha and Dar Es Salaam Regions reported incidents of violence where members of the police were firing arms;
- (b) SADC observers were granted free access to all the polling stations;

- (c) 70% of the polling stations and their surroundings were free of campaign materials or visible campaign activities;
- (d) 96% of the polling stations visited were adequately laid out;
- (e) 93% of the polling stations observed opened on time;
- (f) The voters' register was displayed in 93% of the polling stations observed;
- (g) There were posters educating voters on the steps of voting posted outside 59% of the polling stations observed;
- (h) Party agents and observers were present before opening and at the time of opening in 89% of the polling stations observed. However, there were more CCM party agents than others. The Mission observed that in some polling stations, although party agents were present, they were prevented from entering the polling stations to observe the opening procedures;
- (i) In 93% of the polling stations observed, ballot boxes were locked and sealed adequately before voting started, while in some polling stations, some ballot boxes only had one seal instead of two seals. Some ballot boxes were loosely sealed and appeared easy to open;

- (j) In 85% of the polling stations observed, the Presiding Officer showed the empty ballot boxes to all present before locking and sealing them;
- (k) The presence of police was observed at 96% of the polling stations. The Mission noted that in 88% of the polling stations observed, the police were not armed. In some polling stations, they were more than the number of voters. In Dar Es Salaam, the Mission noted the heavy presence of the police and some major roads were closed;
- (l) 89% of the polling stations observed were accessible to all voters, including people with disabilities;
- (m) In 96% of the polling stations observed, essential election materials were available in the correct quantity before opening;
- (n) The Mission noted a very low voter turnout in all polling stations observed. Some polling centres did not have voters at all;
- (o) The Mission observed that in some polling stations observed, there were multiple orderly stacked ballots in the ballot box during voting, which created a perception of ballot stuffing, and an impression that individual(s) cast more than one vote at a time with the intention to cheat the election system;
- (p) The Mission could not generate polling, closing and counting statistics due to internet shutdown that negatively impacted the use of the SEOM system used to generate data;

- (q) Most of our observers could not observe closing and counting due to incidents and threats of violence in some areas; and
- (r) The Mission did not observe the presence of domestic observers in most of the polling stations.

5. RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

5.1 At this juncture, allow me to recall that the SEOM is continuing the process of electoral observation in the post-election phase. As such, the Mission will not provide comprehensive recommendations or qualifications for the election at this stage. The Mission recommends as follows:

(a) In line with the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2021), the Government and the National Assembly are urged to prioritise an inclusive process of the review of the Constitution of the country with a view to soliciting public views on the current and future modalities with respect to independent political candidates, permitting election petitions related to the presidential election, and judicial review of some of the decisions of the electoral management bodies;

(b) In line with the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2021), creating an enabling environment to ensure that there are no exclusionary requirements on individuals seeking to be nominated for election;

- (c) The Electoral Management Bodies and security personnel are urged to take measures to ensure that international election observers are accredited on time, provided with all administrative documentation as required by the law, and given the appropriate treatment when conducting their duties; and
- (d) In addition to other national gender equity initiatives, political parties are urged to fully implement section 10C(1)(b) and (2) as read with the Third Schedule of the Political Party Affairs Laws (Amendment) Act, No. 3 of 2024, with respect to gender and social cohesion policies in order to enhance the meaningful participation of women in politics, particularly as candidates for election.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the SEOM observed that the pre-election and opening phases were conducted in an orderly manner. In view of the Mission observations as detailed above, and mindful of the preliminary nature of this statement, it is the SEOM's tentative conclusion that, in most areas, voters could not express their democratic will. Overall, the 2025 General Election in the United Republic of Tanzania fell short of the requirements of the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

The Mission appeals to the citizens of the country to channel their concerns through established legal procedures and processes and not resort to violence or threats thereof.

Following the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2021), our final report will be issued within thirty (30) days of this Preliminary Statement.

The SEOM advises that this statement was not delivered two days after election day, and to the public within the URT as is the normal SEOM practice. This was due to the above-mentioned security and communication challenges, which made it impractical to follow the normal SEOM procedure.

The SEAC shall return at an appropriate time to undertake a post-election review to determine the extent to which the recommendations of SEOM have been implemented and the nature of support, if any, that the Member State holding elections may require from the SADC region to implement those proposals.

Thank you very much!

Muito Obrigado!

Merci Beaucoup!

Asante Sana!